

May 17, 2019

Senator Ginny Burdick, Chair
Senate Committee on Rules
900 Court St. NE
Salem Oregon 97301

Re: SB 723 Support

Dear Chairman Burdick and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity be heard on SB 723. My name is Rene Tatro, and I live here in Oregon. I'm a hunter, a member of the NRA, and, I confess – in my younger and less thoughtful years – to having hunted coyotes with my dad and his friends. But when I learned more about this remarkable creature, and its intimate, intertwined history with our species, and all the traits, instincts and behaviors we share, I put away my rifle and replaced it with respect and veneration for the coyotes. That is why I ask for your support of SB 723.

I know that as legislators, you are often forced to make decisions with imperfect or incomplete information, and that sometimes those decisions are hard ones to make. In those cases, sometimes you just have to let ethics be your guide. Fortunately, the decision before you today is one where both ethics and facts align. Although there is no shortage of misinformation and lore about coyotes, the science, from Dr. Robert Wielgus and many other renowned scientists and experienced wildlife managers, is overwhelmingly compelling in favor of SB 723. They point out that the mass killing of coyotes will not mitigate conflicts with livestock and could even increase them. It will also not reduce coyote populations. It is simply killing for cash and prizes. In fact, the Oregon Hunters Association has openly admitted that these killing contests are just for fun and won't impact the population size. They don't contribute to predator control.

So as an Oregon hunter myself, I would like to share my own, unique perspective: To me, and many hunters I know, ethics are very, very important. Hunting ethically, treating the quarry with respect. On this score, coyotes teach an important ethics lesson we should all learn, a lesson that underpins this bill: I have been around coyotes all my life, and I have never seen a coyote kill for fun. I have seen a pack of wild dogs slaughter lambs in a field at random, but a coyote kills to eat. To defend its young. To feed its young.

Hunters today in Oregon are a small minority – I think between 7 and 7.5% of the population. Hunting, to me, is a privilege, not a right. And while some hunters may be here today opposing this bill, I submit that they are behaving like ostriches putting their heads in the sand.

If those 7 or so percent who are hunters do not wake up to the public sentiment of ethicality and get into step with it, that 93% will do what overwhelming majorities can do: they will abridge our privilege. This bill is not an abridgement of ethical hunting practices. It is a preservation of them.

So I urge you to approve SB 723, and give these wonderful creatures the respect they are due. Compromising ethics – that is a bad and slippery slope to be on. And using “tradition” to justify a departure from more enlightened modern thinking about ethics is myopic. Please pass SB 723 and help stop this slide down the slippery slope to who knows what.

Thank you for your time and attention, and for the important service you are providing to all Oregonians.

Rene Tatro
Lake Oswego, Oregon

